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SKETCH

OF

HANNAH MARSHMAN

BY

Mrs. J. T. Gracey.

PRICE, Three Cents.

WOMAN'S FOREIGN MISSIONARY SOCIETY
OF THE
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH,
36 BROMFIELD STREET, BOSTON, MASS.

MRS. HANNAH MARSHMAN,

First Woman Missionary

...to India...

The first missionary to the women of India, and, indeed, the first of all woman missionaries in modern times, was Hannah Marshman. Born in England in 1767, a hundred and thirty years ago, she spent forty-seven years of a happy married life and a short widowhood in the Baptist Brotherhood, formed by her husband, Joshua Marshman, D.D., with Carey and Ward, at Serampore, Bengal. There she died, at the ripe age of eighty years, on March 1, 1847. Though the mother of twelve children, Mrs. Marshman trained the six who survived for the positions of usefulness and dignity which most of them filled. She spent almost every day of her long life, after she landed in India in the year 1799, in educating the girls and the women of Bengal to know and to serve Jesus Christ. She supplied to the Brotherhood all the domestic comfort and much of the loving harmony, without which her husband, and Carey, and their associates could not have accomplished half of what the Holy Spirit enabled them to do for the highest good of the people of India and Southern Asia.

Hannah Shepherd was married in the year 1791 to Joshua Marshman, then twenty-three years of age, and soon after he resolved to join the mission in Bengal. His young wife's prudence and care for their two young children made her hesitate for a little, but soon she too "cordially" surrendered herself to the Divine call. On October 13, 1799, the missionary party landed at the Danish settlement of Serampore, when, falling on their knees, Mr. Marshman led them in blessing God for the safe voyage and the beginning of their mission to the millions of India.

In the division of labor among that remarkable trio of missionaries — Carey, Ward and Marshman — Carey had the translation of the Scriptures, Ward had the press, and the schools fell to Marshman, and to his wife far more than to him, as events proved. The pecuniary result of this splendid organization, as it extended during the next forty years, was unique in the history not only of all Christian Missions, but of all philanthropy. The one woman and the three men, with their children and assistants, were the means of earning nearly half a million dollars for the work of God from the Persian Gulf to the Pacific Ocean. Of this enormous contribution, besides the self support of the workers, Carey gave half, and the woman, Hannah Marshman, alone gave at least one fourth, or more than $100,000.

How was this done? All under the direct guidance and help of the good providence of God! An advertisement made it known all over North India that girls and boys would be received as boarders, to be

educated as Christians along with the Serampore missionaries' children. The girls' school especially became so famous that we find the three missionaries reporting to the Baptist Society in England at the end of the year 1801: "Last year Mrs. Marshman opened a school for young ladies, which much increases, so that we have been under the further necessity of enlarging our habitation."

It may easily be imagined how the number of her children, their birth and not infrequent death, affected her amid the three-fold toil of her own school, her work among the native women, and her domestic care of all the Brotherhood for a time.

Four years later, in January, 1805, Hannah Marshman reviews her five years' experience in a letter to a friend in England. Never was there such a Martha and Mary in one as these documents prove her to have been, always listening to the voice of the Master, yet always doing the many things he entrusted to her without feeling cumbered or irritable or envious. To this friend she recounts instances of God's goodness only, especially when the roof of an addition to the school fell in without harming the girls. She adds this unconscious picture of the happy life of the Brotherhood, of which she, in truth, formed the pervasive bond:

"On Friday evenings after worship, we generally meet to sup and chat and hear the Calcutta news — this being the evening that Brother Carey comes home. As I was returning across to our own house I trod on a serpent, which twisted round my leg and gave my heel a hard smack. I shook it off

and felt no harm. I had hold of Mr. Marshman's arm, or probably I might have fallen down. Having a lantern, I saw it make its way into the grass, and went home a little terrified, but much more surprised.

'Unhurt, on serpents you shall tread,
When found in duty's way.'

Will any one say the Lord is not among us? . . . . We are enlarging our coast on every side by repairing and building, in expectation of more boarders and of visitors from America. We are nearly sixty in number, yet we scarcely ever sit more than twenty minutes at breakfast or tea. A chest of tea at eighty rupees" ($45 there) "lasts three months and a fortnight. We use nine quarts of milk in a day; we have twenty quarts for a rupee. . . At seven o'clock school begins; at nine at night the children are in bed, after which time is my holiday to read, write or work. But I am often so overcome with fatigue and the scorching heat of the day, that I feel neither will nor power to do anything at all; and when I sit down to converse with you it is with a weary body, a stupid soul, and dim eyes; but I am sure of having all my faults lightly passed over and all covered with love."

Hannah Marshman's "ladies' school" was an evangelizing agency of the most direct kind, apart from the large sum which it contributed to the extension of native missions. Its pupils were chiefly Eurasians or East Indians, of the then fast-increasing and utterly neglected community who had sprung originally from white fathers and native mothers. She was the first

to care for their daughters, so far as these were not the orphans of military officers or soldiers. From her famous school in a generation there passed out relays of truly Christian young women, trained and ready to become missionaries to their native sisters. Until such agents were educated and converted, and until the instruction of native youths had made headway in the boys' schools and in the Serampore College, female education among the Hindus and Mohammedans was impossible.

In the famous periodical, the *Friend of India*, which flourished from 1817–75, the Serampore Brotherhood essays were of such value that the earlier series were reprinted in London. One of these, which appeared in 1882, on "Female Education in India," gave an impulse to the movement at which Hannah Marshman was the first to toil, and for which she had provided the cultured teachers.

All through her later life Hannah Marshman was working for the women of the lower classes who could be at once reached. In 1824 her Serampore Native Female Education Society, formed to make the movement permanent and continuous when she should be removed, conducted fourteen native girls' schools with two hundred and sixty pupils. Since the administrative reforms and the Queen's proclamation of toleration and personal encouragement of native female education and medical aid, which followed the mutiny, Hannah Marshman's pioneering self-sacrifice and wisdom have borne richer and more plentiful fruit than even her faith dared to hope. Since 1847 her dust has lain in the sacred enclosure

of the mission cemetery at Serampore beside that of her husband and Carey and Ward and a child of the Judsons. But the India she knew is being changed, and will be transformed by the principles she was the first to set in motion for the redemption of its daughters, without whose evangelization the East can be neither civilized nor Christian. As she was the first, Hannah Marshman was also one of the greatest of woman missionaries.

Biographical Sketches.



William Carey	.03
Mrs. Doremus	.03
Fidelia Fiske	.03
Isabel Hart	.25
Mary Lyon	.03
Mrs. Mullens	.03
Melinda Rankin	.03
Charlotte M. Tucker (A. L. O. E.)	.03
Mrs. Harriet M. Warren	.05
Pandita Ramabai	.05
Fanny J. Butler, M. D.	.03
Hannah Marshman	.03

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